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COMMON CAUSE FOUNDATION

# No Cause is an Island

How People are Influenced by Values  
Regardless of the Cause

[valuesandframes.org](http://valuesandframes.org)



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# Foreword

Proportionate responses to today's most pressing social and environmental challenges are unforeseeable, other than in the context of far broader and deeper public demand for change. The new research presented in this report helps to highlight how such a movement for change might be built: by working with an understanding of the values that motivate public expressions of concern – almost regardless of social or environmental 'cause'.

This research also epitomises a new way of working. It was only possible because of collaboration across continents, and across the academic and charity sectors. Even within the charity sector, it draws on the input of two very different charities – WWF and Scope.

This is a way of working that we want to support in every way that we can. If you can join this effort to bring together people working in different countries, within different sectors, and on different 'causes', then please be in touch.

**Oliver Smith**  
**Tom Crompton**

Common Cause Foundation  
London

December, 2014

## The Common Cause Foundation

The Common Cause Foundation works internationally to build irresistible public demand for change. Working across business, government and charities, it helps new networks of organisations to engage and strengthen intrinsic values. These are the values upon which proportionate responses to today's most pressing social and environmental challenges will be built.

# Executive Summary

Public concern is crucial to the success of action on social and environmental causes. Neither government nor business can respond adequately to today's profound social and environmental challenges without experiencing far wider public *acceptance* of the need for ambitious change, and far more vocal public *demand* for such change. It is crucial, therefore, that organisations working to help advance these causes understand the factors that serve to shape public concern.

A large and growing body of evidence from social psychology points to the importance of values in motivating people to offer their support to such causes. This report, presenting new research findings, contributes to this understanding in four ways.

First, the research provides further evidence that the values that are communicated to an audience in the course of drawing attention to particular social or environmental causes are of importance in shaping this audience's intention to engage in various forms of civic action to support these causes – writing to an elected representative, joining a public meeting or volunteering. The results show that **messages about environmental or disability causes framed through appeal to intrinsic and self-transcendent values – that is, through the use of messages that invoke concerns about values such as social justice, equality, freedom to choose or unity with nature – perform better in strengthening support for both environmental and disability causes than messages framed to appeal to extrinsic and self-enhancing values – such as wealth or success.**

Second, the results show that **messages that combined both intrinsic, self-transcendent values and extrinsic, self-enhancing values are every bit as ineffective as texts that advanced the extrinsic arguments alone.** In other words, from the point of view of motivating expressions of concern about social or environmental issues, it seems that it's important to appeal to intrinsic, self-transcendence values *while avoiding* appeals to extrinsic, self-enhancement values.

Third, the results show that the first and second points outlined above are true regardless of the values that a person holds to be important. That is, even participants who were relatively more disposed toward self-enhancement values were more likely to report an intention to take action to help address problems associated with disability or the environment when presented with an intrinsic, self-transcendence message about disability or the environment than when presented with an extrinsic, self-enhancement message. In other words, **it seems that messages invoking intrinsic, self-transcendence values are the most effective, regardless of how important a person holds these values to be.** This result presents a further challenge to the 'values matching' strategy that is still advocated by some marketing consultancies and campaign groups.

Fourth, the results show that **the values reflected in a message about the work of one organisation (WWF or Scope) have a significant influence on an audience's intention to help an organisation working on a very different cause (disability in the case of a message about the work of WWF; environment in the case of a message about the work of Scope).**

One might not expect an audience's motivation to support an organisation working on disability to be influenced greatly, if at all, by the way in which a message relating to conservation is framed. Similarly, one might not expect an audience's motivation to support an organisation working on conservation to be influenced greatly, if at all, by the way in which a message relating to disability is framed.

Yet texts that framed the work of either organisation in terms of intrinsic, self-transcendence values were as effective in eliciting support for one organisation as they were in eliciting support for the other.

This last result, if confirmed through further work, suggests that in communicating about a specific area of work, a charity has the opportunity to exert influence on public intention to support *other* social and environmental causes – even causes that appear to be of a very different 'type'. No cause is an island.

Taken together, these insights have striking implications for the way in which many charities work. Today, most charities maintain a *cause-specific focus*. They deploy a range of arguments urging that governments, business or citizens accord greater importance to the particular cause upon which they work.

For example, consider a typical conservation charity. It may, in the course of its work, draw attention to a range of imperatives for conservation – including both the aesthetic beauty of nature (an intrinsic, self-transcendence value), and the financial costs of biodiversity loss (an extrinsic, self-enhancement value).

In appealing to extrinsic, self-enhancing values (here, the financial value of nature) this charity risks eroding public support for action on conservation issues. This, it seems, will be the case regardless of whether the charity *also* simultaneously advances appeals to intrinsic, self-transcendence values.

Furthermore, because of its issue-specific focus, this conservation charity is unlikely to be collaborating with other charities, with a view to building common understanding of the importance of framing appeals in terms of intrinsic, self-transcendence values. So (to take just one example) it is unlikely to be working with disability charities in order to explore the likely impacts of either organisation's campaigns or communications upon the other organisation's work.

The results of this research corroborates the argument that we have advanced elsewhere: charities will struggle to build the necessary levels of public demand for action on social and environmental causes until they begin to express an understanding of these interdependencies in their campaigns and communications.

# 1. Public concern about today's big challenges

Many thousands of people, employed by charities, government agencies, and businesses, work to promote positive action on social and environmental causes – from biodiversity loss to international development, from climate change to social exclusion, from public health to inequality. Much of these people's work focuses on advocating changes in government policy, on campaigning for new legislation, or on urging changes in business practices. Thus, for example, charity campaigns may be aimed at changing unfair international trade and investment rules, or encouraging companies to pay a living wage to their workers, or to stop oil exploration.

Public concern is crucial to the success of these initiatives. Neither government nor business can respond adequately to today's pressing social and environmental challenges without far wider public acceptance of the need for ambitious change and far more vocal public demand for such change.

Even where political decision-makers feel personal sympathy with campaigns aimed at driving social or environmental change, they can often find themselves highly constrained. At the very least, they must maintain the passive approval of their electorate. More often they must experience active public demand for change – whether to stiffen their own resolve, or to help them in standing up to powerful and countervailing interests.

Similarly, business leaders – however philanthropically motivated – are importantly constrained by what their shareholders and customers will accept. They must work in that narrow space where social and environmental imperatives can be brought into alignment with competitive advantage. To be sure, assessed on its own terms, this is a space that provides for excitement and innovation. But, without either far-reaching changes in shareholder and customer preferences or new regulation, this space cannot accommodate responses that in any way match the scale of today's profound social and environmental challenges.<sup>1</sup> So, again, public pressure is a prerequisite for businesses to embrace change at the scale that is needed.

Overall, organisations that seek to address social and environmental challenges – charities, government agencies and progressive businesses – must deepen their understanding of the reasons that public demand for change is currently so shallow and undependable. They must better understand the factors that influence what matters to people.

The role of charities is likely to be particularly important in these efforts. Of course, charities play a role in advising business and government. But they also exert significant direct influence on public appetite for change. Polling suggests that people rate charities among society's most trusted institutions, and believe them to be effective in bringing about social change (Ipsos-MORI, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, businesses themselves exert influence over customer preferences. But this influence



This report presents the results of research focused on the campaign and communication approaches of two charities working on seemingly very different causes: conservation and disability. These causes were chosen because if – as this research suggests – campaigning on conservation has an important influence on the success of campaigns on disability (and vice versa), then it seems likely that such interdependencies will operate between many other causes – with implications for charities working on a wide diversity of issues.

But it is clear that the implications of this research will extend far beyond the charity sector: they are also important for the work of government or business where this work is concerned with fostering greater public concern about social or environmental causes.

## 2. What determines what matters to people?

Many social psychologists address the question 'what determines what matters to people?' through the lens of values. Values are the aspects of people's identities that reflect what they deem to be desirable, important, and worthy of striving for in life (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). A wide range of studies has shown that values influence both people's attitudes and behaviours. They affect political persuasions, willingness to participate in political action, career choices, ecological footprints and feelings of personal wellbeing (Schwartz, 2011). Social psychologists have identified a set of *intrinsic* and *self-transcendent values* (henceforth, I/ST values) that are consistently found to underpin both concern about social and environmental problems, and action in line with this concern (from day-to-day behaviour, to voting choice, to political activism) (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Grouzet *et al.*, 2005). These, then, are the values that organisations setting out to tackle social and environmental problems should seek to engage and strengthen if they are to help build public acceptance of, and active public demand for, ambitious change.

I/ST values include values of *social justice*, *equality*, *unity with nature* and *self-acceptance*. Simply engaging these values – any of them, it seems – leads to increased support for social and environmental causes (Crompton & Kasser, 2010 and references therein). I/ST values stand in opposition to *extrinsic* and *self-enhancement values* (henceforth, E/SE values). These include concern about *wealth*, *social status* or *public image*: aims shown to be associated with lower levels of concern about environmental problems, and lower motivation to help address them (Crompton & Kasser, 2010). So, just as public expressions of concern about social or environmental problems will be promoted through engaging and strengthening I/ST values, influences that serve to engage and strengthen E/SE values will tend to undermine such expressions of concern.

This has been documented experimentally. For example, drawing a person's attention, even subtly, to an E/SE value leaves them less likely to offer help to another person (Maio *et al.*, 2009; Vohs *et al.*, 2006) and less likely to express positive attitudes towards poor people and the environment (Chilton *et al.* 2012). While further research is necessary to fully explain the processes involved, it seems likely that when E/SE values are activated or engaged, people become both more concerned about aims consistent with those values (e.g., power, status, money, competition) and less concerned about aims that are inconsistent with E/SE values, namely the I/ST values that promote greater care, empathy, and environmental concern.

Repeated engagement of values seems to have the effect of strengthening the importance that a person places on these values in a more durable or 'dispositional' way (Sheldon & Krieger, 2004; Bardi *et al.*, 2009). Michael Sandel makes this point powerfully in his book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. He writes that altruism, generosity, solidarity, and civic spirit (attributes closely

aligned to intrinsic values) are “like muscles that develop and grow stronger with exercise” (Sandel, 2012: 130).

Thus, any experience or communication that engages I/ST values is likely to promote deeper social and environmental concern. For example, in experiments where I/ST values are engaged, but *no mention is made of the environment*, participants are significantly more likely to support a range of environmental policy interventions (Sheldon *et al.*, 2011). This effect has been called ‘bleed-over’. It seems that engaging any one of a constellation of I/ST values can ‘bleed-over’ into the activation of others – prompting increased social and environmental concern.

The implications of such insights for charities, government initiatives and progressive businesses working to strengthen public concern about social and environmental issues have been explored thoroughly elsewhere (see, for example, Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Crompton, 2010).

Here we report on a new study that builds upon this body of research. It tests the effectiveness of short communications describing approaches to addressing either conservation problems or challenges confronted by disabled people. These texts were written such that they invoke I/ST, E/SE, or both sets of values. The effectiveness of these texts in motivating members of a panel to express concern about either conservation problems or the needs of disabled people was then tested.

This study builds on previous studies in several ways.

Firstly, while many previous studies have examined the effects of priming either I/ST or E/SE values upon participants’ motivation to engage in pro-social or pro-environmental behaviour (see Crompton & Kasser, 2010 for review), few such studies have primed these values by asking participants to read texts that highlight a pro-social or pro-environmental behaviour.

Secondly, those studies that have primed values using texts that highlight a pro-social or pro-environmental behaviour (see, for example, Evans *et al.*, 2013 and Bolderdijk *et al.*, 2013) have not examined the influence of primes upon participants’ concern about other social and environmental problems, relating to different ‘causes’.

Thirdly, this study examines whether participants’ prior inclination towards particular values interacts with the effectiveness of a message in eliciting expressions of pro-social or pro-environmental behaviour. This is an important question to explore in the debate about the effectiveness of so-called ‘values-matching’ strategies. Proponents of these strategies advocate tailoring a message to specifically engage those values deemed to be dominant among members of a particular target audience (Rose, 2014).

Fourthly, practitioners are sometimes understandably critical of the results of studies examining the effects of value-priming, arguing that the primes used lack

authenticity. Here this concern is addressed by using text taken from charities' own communications, adapting this text for experimental use with the assistance of communication professionals from two large charities (WWF and Scope).

Finally, previous research has often used approaches to value-priming that lack realism in the context of how most charities communicate. So, for example, participants in previous experiments have been asked to write briefly about the importance that they attach to particular values (Chilton *et al.*, 2012) or to memorise value-relevant words (Maio *et al.*, 2009). In this study, however, participants were simply asked to read a short text, attentively and in anticipation of being asked questions about this text.

### 3. The research

This section presents the results of three separate studies.

- Our first study examined the relationship between a person's prior orientation towards particular values, and his or her concern about disability or conservation.
- Our second study examined the effects of asking participants to read a short piece of text (or 'prime') about the work of either a conservation organisation (WWF) or a disability organisation (Scope). Here we tested the effects of reading about a conservation organisation (WWF) on participants' support for the work of an environmental organisation, and the effects of reading about a disability organisation (Scope) on participants' support for the work of an organisation working on disability.
- Our third study again examined the effects of asking participants to read a short piece of text about the work of either a conservation or disability organisation. Here, however, we tested the effects of reading about a conservation organisation (WWF) on participants' support for the work of an organisation working on disability (Scope), and the effects of reading about a disability organisation (Scope) on participants' support for the work of an organisation working on the environment (WWF).

Several weeks before examining the effects of different primes, we had surveyed the values that individual participants held to be important. As a result, we were able to look for interactions between a participant's prior values-orientation and the type of prime presented to a participant, in influencing responses to the questionnaire. This question is very important for debate about the effectiveness of the 'values-matching' strategy, as advanced by some campaign consultancies.

#### 3.1 The panel

Our study made use of a panel of 13,820 people, the UK Public Opinion Monitor, maintained by Spencer Henson and Stacey Townsend at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton, UK. The panel is regularly surveyed, by email, on social issues at 4-6 week intervals.

In order to assess participants' prior value disposition, all panel members were sent, by email, a Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) ([Schwartz \*et al.\*, 2001](#)). 1890 participants (or 13.7%) completed the PVQ. Data from the PVQ was used to calculate a value that was used as an indicator of the relative importance that a participant placed on self-transcendence as opposed to self-enhancement values. This variable, the 'relative intrinsic-extrinsic value orientation' (RIEVO), ranged from -3 to +5. It was taken as an indication of an individual panel-member's dispositional orientation towards self-transcendence values and away from self-

enhancement values. Higher values reflect a stronger orientation towards self-transcendence values.<sup>2</sup>

3 months after sending out the PVQ, we randomly assigned participants to one of several experimental conditions. Participants in each condition were then emailed a link to a survey document. This document was specific to each condition and comprised several pages of questions. Participants completed these surveys online, using their web-browsing program.

Each survey opened by requesting that participants answer each question sequentially without clicking 'back' on their browser, and that they set aside 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire at one sitting. They were then asked to read a short piece of text that they were told "describes a charity in the UK", and were asked to complete either an attitudinal or an intention survey. The attitudinal survey comprised a series of questions assessing participants' attitudes towards a range of social or environmental issues; the intention survey asked about their intention to support a charity – by donating, volunteering or campaigning. A reminder email was sent to those participants who had not completed the survey after one week, and the survey was closed after a second week. In total, 652 participants responded to the survey.

## 3.2 Three studies and the results of these

### *Study 1*

Our first study examined the relationship between a participant's RIEVO and his or her concern about disability or conservation. An extensive body of previous work has established that people who hold I/ST values to be more important than E/SE values are likely to express stronger concern about a range of social and environmental issues (see, for example, [Crompton & Kasser, 2010](#)).

We presented groups of participants with a questionnaire to assess their attitudes towards child-protection, conservation, disability and some current political issues (see [Appendix 1](#)). We predicted that people with a higher RIEVO would tend to express stronger concern about biodiversity loss, disability issues and child abuse.

Other participants were presented with one of two intention surveys (see [Appendix 2](#)) asking about their intentions to support the work of either an environmental or a disability organisation. These surveys explored both intentions to offer financial support (to donate to an organisation working on either issue) and to offer non-

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<sup>2</sup> 'Relative intrinsic-extrinsic value orientation' (RIEVO) was calculated by taking a participant's average score on each of the Universalism and Benevolence items on the PVQ and subtracting his or her average score on the Power and Achievement items. A low RIEVO therefore indicates a participant who is relatively more oriented towards self-enhancement values; a high RIEVO indicates a participant who is relatively more oriented towards self-transcendence values. Here, 'Relative intrinsic-extrinsic value orientation' (RIEVO) is used rather than the more accurate but cumbersome 'Relative self-transcendence – self-enhancement value orientation' (RSTSEVO).

financial support (writing to a member of parliament, joining a public meeting or volunteering). We predicted that people with a higher RIEVO (i.e. participants who were more strongly oriented towards self-transcendence as opposed to self-enhancement values) would tend to record stronger intentions to take action to help address either conservation or disability issues.

As we'd expected, we found a significant positive association between participants' RIEVO and concern about environment, disability and child poverty (the three issues upon which most items in the questionnaire were focused).

We also found a significant positive association between RIEVO and agreement with the statements "I worry about free health care not being available to all", "I worry about cuts to the welfare state", and "The problem of immigration to the UK has been greatly exaggerated". There was a significant negative association between RIEVO and agreement with the statement "I care greatly that current levels of taxation should be reduced". There were no significant correlations between RIEVO and responses to the statements "I worry about threats to UK national security", "I worry about achieving economic growth" or "The problem of crime has been greatly exaggerated".<sup>3</sup>

Also as we expected, there was a significant positive association between participants' RIEVO and their intentions to offer financial support to either charity ( $\beta=0.14$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) and between participants' RIEVO and their intention to take non-financial action to help in the work of either charity ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Participants who were relatively more oriented towards ST values expressed a stronger intention to offer both forms of support.

## *Study 2*

In the second study we examined the effects of asking participants to read a short piece of text (or 'prime') about the work of either a conservation organisation (WWF) or a disability organisation (Scope). Both are large, well-known charities in the UK. We anticipated that primes that framed the work of such organisations by drawing on I/ST values would lead participants to express stronger concern than would primes that framed the work of such organisations by drawing on E/SE values. Previous work has established that social and environmental concern are

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<sup>3</sup> The association between these items and the importance that participants' placed on universalism values was also examined. Here people for whom universalism values were more important were significantly more likely to agree with the statements: "I worry about cuts to the welfare state", "The problem of immigration to the UK has been greatly exaggerated" and "The problem of crime has been greatly exaggerated". There was a negative association between universalism and agreement with the statements "I worry about threats to UK national security", "I care greatly that current levels of taxation should be reduced". The results trended strongly towards people scoring high on universalism values being less likely to agree with the statement "I worry about achieving economic growth". There was no significant association with responses to the statement "I worry about free health care not being available to all".

heightened when information about a cause is framed in a way that invokes I/ST rather E/SE values (for review, see [Crompton & Kasser, 2010](#)).

Three texts were prepared describing WWF's work on biodiversity conservation, as were three parallel texts describing Scope's work on disability. We manipulated these texts such that they framed the work of each organisation in I/ST, E/SE or mixed (i.e. both I/ST and E/SE) ways. For example, primes relating to conservation drew attention to "people's inherent appreciation of, and love for, the natural world" (intrinsic prime), or "the financial value of the environment, and the commercial benefits that people derive" (extrinsic prime). The mixed prime combined values-relevant text from both the I/ST and E/SE primes. Three analogous texts relating to Scope's work on disability were also prepared. (All six primes are reproduced in [Appendix 3](#)).

Experimental work of this nature is often criticised by practitioners on the grounds that the material tested and the indicators of concern lack 'external validity' – that is, the material does not accurately reflect the type of language typically used, or the requests typically made, by organisations that are working on social or environmental causes. For this reason, the texts that we used in this study were based on actual copy developed by WWF or Scope for public audiences. In all cases, communication staff in each organisation reviewed the final texts to ensure that the tone and content were consistent with material that each organisation produces.

After reading the text, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess their concern about either environmental issues (in the case of participants reading the text about the work of WWF) or disability issues (in the case of participants reading the text about the work of Scope).

We assessed concern in two ways:

- In one set of experimental conditions, participants were asked to complete an attitudinal questionnaire that included items asking about their attitudes towards the cause highlighted in the text that they had just read.
- In a second set of experimental conditions, participants were asked about their intention to help an organisation working on the cause about which they had just read, by either: (i) writing to an MP on behalf of the organisation; (ii) volunteering for the organisation; (iii) joining a public meeting; and (iv) making a financial donation. In these conditions we randomised, for each participant, the order in which these four sets of questions were asked.

We found that the type of prime (I/ST, E/SE or mixed) had no significant effect upon either:

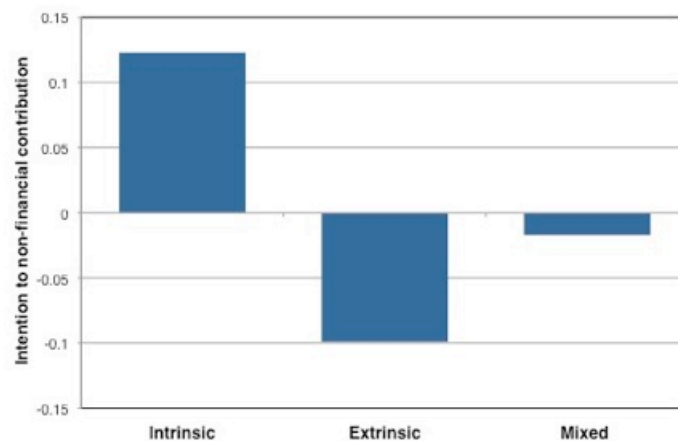
- Participants' attitude towards the causes as explored in the questionnaire; or,



- Participants' intention to make a financial donation to WWF or Scope (Although here results were trending towards I/ST primes being more positively influential on intention to make a financial donation than E/SE or mixed primes).

However, we found that I/ST texts performed significantly better than either E/SE or mixed texts in eliciting stronger concern about the issue highlighted, as assessed through the tests of intention to offer non-financial support to an organisation (i.e., writing to an MP on behalf of the organisation; volunteering for the organisation; joining a public meeting). This was true across both types of cause (disability and environment). See [Figure 1](#) for a representation of these results.

Notably, we found no significant difference between the effectiveness of E/SE and mixed texts in eliciting positive intentions – in other words, they performed similarly poorly.



**Figure 1**  
**Intention to offer non-financial support as a function of prime**

The bar on the left shows the averaged intentions for participants who (i) were asked to read an I/ST prime about the environment, and who were then invited to state their intention to help address environmental issues through non-financial action; and (ii) were asked to read an I/ST prime about disability, and who were then invited to state their intention to help address problems related to disability through non-financial action. The middle bar shows averaged intentions for the two groups of participants who were asked to read E/SE primes, and the third bar shows averaged intentions for the two groups of participants who were asked to read mixed primes. Intrinsic primes performed significantly better than both extrinsic and mixed primes. Although it is not immediately apparent from the means shown above, extrinsic and mixed primes performed equally

poorly; the relation between extrinsic and mixed conditions and non-financial support is non-significant ( $\beta=.05$ ,  $p=.22$ ).

### *Study 3*

In our third study we again examined the effects of asking participants to read a short piece of text about the work of either a conservation or disability organisation. In this study, however, we tested the effects of reading about a conservation organisation (WWF) on participants' support for the work of an organisation working on disability (Scope), and the effects of reading about a disability organisation (Scope) on participants' support for the work of an organisation working on the environment (WWF).

As discussed in Section 2, previous work has pointed to 'bleed-over' between related values, such that priming one value (for example, 'protecting the environment') temporarily increases the importance that participants place on related values (for example, 'equality'), with associated attitudinal and behavioural consequences (Maio *et al.*, 2009; Sheldon *et al.*, 2011).<sup>4</sup>

The I/ST conservation prime (see Appendix 3) invokes values such as 'protecting the environment' and 'unity with nature' – following Schwartz (1994) these are elements of the 'universalism' values group.

The I/ST disability prime invokes values such as being 'independent' and 'choosing own goals' (both items in the 'self-direction' values group) and 'equality' (in the 'universalism' group).

We predicted that participants who read the I/ST disability prime would experience activation of values such as 'independent', 'choosing own goals' and 'equality'; that the activation of these values would, in turn, 'bleed over' into the neighbouring I/ST values of 'unity with nature' and 'protecting the environment'; and that consequently participants would experience heightened concern about environmental issues.

We also predicted that participants who read the I/ST conservation prime would experience activation of values such as 'unity with nature' and 'protecting the environment'; that the activation of these values would, in turn, 'bleed over' into the neighbouring values of 'social justice' and 'equality'; and that consequently participants would experience heightened concern about disability issues.

We therefore predicted that I/ST primes focused on one cause (disability or environment) would serve to promote concern about the other cause.

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<sup>4</sup> Here 'related values' are values in neighbouring areas of the values circumplex (Schwartz, 1992).

As in studies 1 and 2, we found no significant association between the type of prime that participants read (I/ST, E/SE or mixed) and either attitudinal outcomes or intention to offer financial support.

However our results again showed that non-financial forms of support were significantly influenced by the primes. In this study, the results showed that participants presented with I/ST primes about **conservation** (rather than E/SE or mixed primes about conservation) were subsequently more likely to intend to offer non-financial support to **disability** work, and that participants presented with I/ST primes about **disability** (rather than E/SE or mixed primes about disability) were subsequently more likely to intend to offer non-financial support to **conservation** work.

In other words, **I/ST primes increased intention to support charities in non-financial ways regardless of whether the cause that participants were asked to support was the same or a different cause than the one about which they had just read.** Expressed in another way, irrespective of whether participants were presented with information about an environment or disability issue, framing this information in terms of I/ST values led them to voice stronger intentions to offer non-financial support for either cause.

The effect of prime was as influential whether participants were asked about their intentions to take action on the same cause that was highlighted in the prime, or their about intentions to take action on the 'other' cause (i.e. conservation in the case of participants who had read a prime related to disability; disability in the case of participants who had read a prime related to conservation). This was result held both in comparing the intrinsic and extrinsic primes ( $\beta=0.10$ ;  $p=0.52$ ) and in comparing the intrinsic and mixed primes ( $\beta=0.21$ ;  $p=0.16$ ).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Main results

#### *Study 1*

Study 1 corroborates previous work demonstrating an association between participants' dispositional value-orientations (RIEVOs) and their support for social and environmental causes. Participants who are more oriented towards I/ST values (relative to E/SE values) are more likely to express an intention to offer support to an organisation working on disability or conservation.

#### *Study 2*

Study 2 also corroborates previous work. The results of this study suggest that engaging I/ST values, as opposed to either E/SE values or I/ST *and* E/SE values simultaneously, serves to strengthen intentions to offer non-financial support to a disability or conservation charity. Most previous studies have used primes unrelated to the social or environmental outcome for which support is subsequently tested. That is, few studies have examined the effects of using values to frame information about a cause on expressions of concern about *this same cause*. Study 2 extends this evidence base. It provides further evidence of the importance of framing information in I/ST ways if one's intention is to encourage expression of support for social or environmental issues – whether by writing to an elected representative, joining a public meeting or volunteering.

Considering both Study 1 and Study 2, it is apparent that participants' stated intention to help address an environmental or social problem is influenced by both (i) the importance that they attach to particular values in a durable or 'dispositional' way, and (ii) the specific values invoked by a communication that draws the participants' attention to this problem.

#### *Study 3*

Study 3 points to the interconnections between campaigns and communications about different causes, even when these at first might be thought to be unrelated.

The results showed that the values reflected in a message about an organisation working on one cause have a significant influence on an audience's intention to take action to help an organisation working on a very different type of cause.

One might not expect that an audience's motivation to support an organisation working on one of these two issues would be greatly, if at all, influenced by the way in which a message relating to the other issue is framed.

In this study, one I/ST prime drew attention to "people's inherent appreciation of, and love for, the natural world" whereas the other highlighted "the barriers that

cause disabled people to be treated unequally” and the imperative to “support [disabled people] in making decisions about what they want to do”. Yet these I/ST primes were equally effective in leading participants to state an intention to offer non-financial support to either WWF or Scope.

Participants in this study, it seems, were attuned to values, regardless of which cause was being promoted.

## 4.2 Attitudinal measures and intention to donate

We anticipated that participants who were asked to read text engaging I/ST values, as opposed to E/SE (or mixed) values, would: (1) express stronger concern about social and environmental issues in the attitudinal survey; and (2) be more likely to report an intention to *donate* to either charity. Neither result was found at a significant level. This box discusses possible reasons.

### *Attitudes to social and environmental problems*

Contrary to our expectations, no consistent results were found associating different primes (I/ST, E/SE or mixed) with participants' *attitudes* towards environmental, disability, or other issues.

Why should this have been the case?

We speculate that reporting an attitude requires a more deliberate reflection on one's *prior attitudes* towards social or environmental issues than stating one's intention to help. It seems possible that intentions may be more subject to temporary changes that are perhaps inconsistent with these prior attitudes. This need not imply that the priming material had no impact. Rather, it may be that the effects were too small to detect, given the sample sizes.<sup>5</sup>

### *Intention to donate*

Participants were found to be no more likely to report an intention to *donate* to either charity when asked to read text engaging I/ST values, as opposed to E/SE (or mixed) values. This surprised us: in a previous (though very differently constructed) behavioural experiment, [Vohs et al. \(2006\)](#) found that priming E/SE values led to lower levels of donation to charity as compared to a control condition in which participants were invited to reflect on a value-neutral topic.

Of course, it is an important result that E/SE values were not found to be any *more* effective at eliciting intention to donate than I/ST values. As we have discussed, there are likely to be other clear advantages to engaging I/ST values and in this

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<sup>5</sup> Our analysis suggests that the absence of a significant association between different primes and participants' subsequent reported attitudes is not a result of a ceiling effect.

study we found that communications that engaged these values did not compromise intention to donate.

Nonetheless, we had expected that engaging I/ST values would increase intention to donate. More work is needed here, but we speculate that among participants in our study, who were simply asked to read a piece of short text attentively, I/ST values were not activated strongly enough to elicit detectable changes in intention to donate. It seems possible that a 'stronger' prime is required to achieve an increase in stated intention to donate than in stated intention to help in non-financial ways. Stating an intention to donate may require a higher level of investment on the part of participants than stating an intention to volunteer or join a meeting. These latter intentions might be seen as a distant prospect, whereas the former can be made immediately (including through a website such as the one participants were using in completing the questionnaire).

Again, it is not possible to conclude that the values engaged through charity communications have no effect upon either intention to donate, or actual donation behaviour. Indeed, as mentioned above, such effects have been found in previous studies.

### 4.3 Further evidence against values-matching

Our results also contribute to the debate about 'values matching', advocated by some campaign consultants (see, for example, [Rose, 2014](#)). Following this approach, also sometimes known by the proprietary name 'Value Modes', an audience is segmented according to the values that individuals within this audience hold to be particularly important at a dispositional level. Different messages are then targeted at each audience segment, with the aim of 'matching' the values characterising this segment.

According to the values matching approach, it is anticipated, for example, that among E/SE-oriented people, a message that conveys E/SE values will be more effective in eliciting expressions of concern than will a message conveying I/ST values.

The peer-reviewed evidence does not support the assumptions underpinning this approach, and there is extensive evidence pointing to the likely problems associated with it (see, for example, [Chilton \*et al.\*, 2012](#); [Kasser & Crompton, 2011](#)). Unfortunately, proponents of the Value Modes approach have not made their data open to scrutiny by others working in this field, citing commercial sensitivities ([Kasser & Crompton, 2011](#)).

Because all participants in the present research had been invited to complete a 'Portrait Values Questionnaire' (PVQ) three months prior to our study, it was possible for us to assess the dispositional value-orientation (RIEVO) of a subset of participants in Studies 2 and 3 who had completed the PVQ at this earlier time.

With this in mind, we assigned 82 participants who had completed the PVQ at this earlier time, at random, to each experimental condition in Studies 2 and 3.

According to the 'value-matching' approach, one would predict that texts framed using E/SE values (about either conservation or disability) would be relatively more effective in motivating expressions of concern, about either cause, among participants who held E/SE values to be relatively more important. Conversely, one would expect texts framed in terms of I/ST values to be relatively less effective in motivating expressions of concern, about either cause, among these same participants.

Our results offered no support for the values matching hypothesis. On the contrary, no interactions were found between a participant's RIEVO and the type of prime presented to a participant in influencing either attitudinal or intention responses.<sup>6</sup> That is, E/SE texts were no more effective in eliciting expressions of concern from participants who were relatively more E/SE-oriented than from participants who were relatively more I/ST-oriented. Conversely, I/ST texts were no less effective in eliciting expressions of concern about conservation or disability from participants who were relatively more E/SE-oriented than from participants who were relatively more I/ST-oriented.

In other words, the results showed that I/ST texts were significantly more effective than E/SE (or mixed) texts in motivating intention to offer non-financial support *irrespective of a participant's prior values disposition*.

These results corroborate previous work that points to the possibility of engaging even extremely 'extrinsically-oriented' audiences through the activation of I/ST values (Chilton *et al.*, 2012). Our results offer no support to the 'values matching strategy' and instead point to the importance of framing messages in terms of I/ST values irrespective of an audience's value orientation.

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<sup>6</sup> The effect of prime on participants' intention to take action on either cause was not significantly influenced by participants' RIEVO score. This was true in examining the effectiveness of intrinsic primes as compared to (i) extrinsic primes ( $\beta=0.09$ ;  $p=0.33$ ) and (ii) mixed primes ( $\beta=0.03$ ;  $p=0.78$ ).

## 5. Some wider implications

Charities typically define their work in a way that is *cause-specific*, with different charities focusing on different causes: for example, 'loss of woodland', 'discrimination against disabled people', 'child labour', 'poverty among retired servicemen', or 'farm-animal welfare'.

The cause-specific focus of most charities has some advantages. It brings resources to bear in deepening people's understanding of the nature of particular problems, and the changes in practices and regulations that will be needed to advance these causes.

But, important as such efforts are, they are not sufficient. Adequate action on many pressing social and environmental challenges will only be taken if public acceptance of – and active demand for – such action can be strengthened. This, in turn, will require an understanding of values and how these are engaged.

The results of the research presented here suggest that in communicating about a particular cause, a charity may exert an important influence on public intention to support *other* social and environmental causes – even causes that appear to be of a very different type.

For example, consider a typical conservation charity. It may, in the course of its work, draw attention to a range of arguments for conservation – including both the aesthetic beauty of nature (an I/ST value) and the financial costs of biodiversity loss (an E/SE value).

It can be seen that, in appealing to E/SE values (here, the financial value of nature), this conservation charity risks eroding public support for action on conservation issues. But, furthermore, it may also inadvertently erode public concern about disability (or, for that matter, a range of other issues – such as human rights, poverty alleviation or child protection).

This conservation charity, however, is unlikely to consider the effects of its campaigns and communications upon public intention to take action on disability.

The cause-specific focus adopted by many charities arises from two sources of pressure:

First, it arises from a legal obligation not to place undue weight on the impacts that its work may have on causes that lie beyond its charitable objectives.

Second, it reflects a concern about 'positioning': cultivating an understanding of a particular problem and the unique contribution that a charity brings to addressing that problem. 'Positioning', according to one leading text for fundraisers and charity managers, is "[t]he act of defining in the minds of the target audience what a particular organization stands for and can offer in relation to other nonprofits. In



simple terms, positioning defines what is unique about an organisation and thus what distinguishes it from other nonprofits seeking to raise funds from similar sources" (Sargeant & Jay, 2010: 83). Many charities view themselves as 'competitors' in a 'marketplace'. According to this model, collaboration – where it emerges at all – is sought not to advance shared concerns, but rather in order to materially benefit a particular charity: "[P]artnerships may open up access to new sources of funds, new markets or simply allow the partner organizations to take advantage of economies of scale and thus lower their costs of fundraising" [*sic*] (Sargeant and Jay, 2010: 26).

But, these factors notwithstanding, a charity has an interest in examining the potential effects of the campaigns and communications of other charities (even those working on very different causes) upon public concern about its *own* charitable objectives.

This points to the possibility of a reciprocal undertaking between different charities working on social or environmental problems. Charities might agree not to undermine one another's work by engaging E/SE values. Such an arrangement could be seen to serve the immediate interests of participating charities: it is not necessary to invoke wider moral obligations in order to build the case for such an agreement.

If such collaboration is to emerge, this will be as a result of the concerted action of charity staff, the action of staff in the trusts and foundations that fund charities, and the demands placed on charities by the people who support them.

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# Appendix 1

## Attitudinal survey

Participants in Study 1 were asked to complete an attitudinal survey. They were presented with the following 25 questions, and asked "To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?" Participants were invited to respond to each statement using a Likert scale (-3 to +3).

The order of the statements was randomised, and presented to all participants in the sequence reproduced below. In reproducing these statements here, a code has been added to each, denoting the cause to which the statement refers. These codes are as follows:

|    |  |
|----|--|
| CP | Child protection   |
| DA | Disability   |
| EV | Environment  |
| PP | Other public policy issues (national healthcare, immigration, security, taxation or welfare) |

Some of these statements were reverse coded (denoted by R). No attempt was made to combine responses to statements related to public policy issues, and for this reason none of these were reverse-coded.

|   |      |
|---|------|
| The problem of child poverty has been greatly exaggerated                                     | CP/R |
| The natural environment is not relevant to me   | EV/R |
| I think too much government money is spent on protecting biodiversity                         | EV/R |
| I worry about threats to UK national security   | PP   |
| The issue of disability is not relevant to me   | DA/R |
| I worry about free health care not being available to all                                     | PP   |
| I worry about cuts to the welfare state   | PP   |
| The problems faced by disabled people have been greatly exaggerated                           | DA/R |
| The problem of loss of biodiversity has been greatly exaggerated                              | EV/R |
| The issue of child poverty is not relevant to me  | CP/R |
| The problem of immigration to the UK has been greatly exaggerated                             | PP   |
| Disability issues are a source of great concern to me   | DA   |
| I think too much government money is spent on the protection of children in poverty in the UK | CP/R |
| I care greatly about the protection of children in poverty in the UK                          | CP   |
| I think that disabled people receive too much government money                                | DA/R |
| Child poverty in the UK is a source of great concern to me                                    | CP   |
| I worry about the treatment of disabled people in the UK                                      | DA   |
| I care greatly that current levels of taxation should be reduced                              | PP   |
| Threats to plants and animals are a source of great concern to me                             | EV   |
| I worry about achieving economic growth   | PP   |
| I care greatly about the protection of disabled people's rights in the UK                     | DA   |
| I care greatly about protection of the UK countryside   | EV   |
| I worry about children in poverty in the UK   | CP   |
| I worry about the loss of wildlife in the UK  | EV   |
| The problem of crime has been greatly exaggerated   | PP   |

# Appendix 2

## Intention survey

The intention survey shown below is specific to disability. The environment-related questionnaire used the same format, replacing the word 'disability' with 'environment' throughout.

Participants were first asked to respond to the question below:

**We have another question about this text, but before we ask you this, we'd like to get a clearer picture of your response to disability issues - something upon which many charities work.**

**Do you intend to get involved with helping a disability initiative in the future? (Tick one)**

|                         |                       |                       |                       |                                    |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely<br>unlikely-4 | -3                    | -2                    | -1                    | Neither<br>likely nor<br>unlikely0 | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | Extremely<br>likely4  |
| <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**Thinking more specifically about charities that work on disability issues please could you answer these further questions?**

They were then presented with the following three sets of questions, in randomised order:

**Charities working on disability issues often rely upon supporters' help in influencing key decision makers like the government. Supporters may contact their local MP, and ask them to take action on an issue, or participate in a public event (for example, a public meeting or a rally).**

**Would you be interested in sending an email to your MP? (Tick one)**

|                                |                       |                       |                       |   |                       |                       |                       |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Not at all<br>interested<br>-4 | -3                    | -2                    | -1                    | Neither<br>interested<br>nor disint<br>erested0 | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | Very<br>interested<br>4 |
| <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |

**Would you be interested in attending a public event? (Tick one)**

|                                |                       |                       |                       |   |                       |                       |                       |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Not at all<br>interested<br>-4 | -3                    | -2                    | -1                    | Neither<br>interested<br>nor disint<br>erested0 | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | Very<br>interested<br>4 |
| <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |

**Charities working on disability issues often rely upon volunteers. Volunteers may be involved in different parts of a charity's work - including fundraising, charity shops, campaigns, direct services for disabled people and helping out in offices around the country.**

**Would you be interested in volunteering? (Tick one)**

|                                |                       |                       |                       |   |                       |                       |                       |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Not at all<br>interested<br>-4 | -3                    | -2                    | -1                    | Neither<br>interested<br>nor disint<br>erested0 | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | Very<br>interested<br>4 |
| <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |

**If you were to get involved, how frequently do you think this would be? (Tick one)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Up to a day a year               | <input type="radio"/> Up to a day a fortnight |
| <input type="radio"/> Up to a day every 6 months       | <input type="radio"/> Up to a day a week      |
| <input type="radio"/> Up to a day a quarter (3 months) | <input type="radio"/> More than a day a week  |
| <input type="radio"/> Up to a day a month              |   |

Charities working on disability issues often rely upon regular monthly donations from supporters.

How interested would you be in donating on a monthly basis to a charity working on disability issues? (Tick one)

|                                |                       |                       |                       |  |                       |                       |                       |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Not at all<br>interested<br>-4 | -3                    | -2                    | -1                    | Neither<br>interested<br>nor disint<br>erested 0 | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | Very<br>interested<br>4 |
| <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   |

If you were to be asked to make a monthly donation to Scope, a charity working on disability issues, please let us know how much you would be willing to give each month?

£

# Appendix 3

## Priming texts

### Disability-related

#### *Disability-intrinsic*

Scope works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. We believe that disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else, enabling them to live the lives they choose. Yet today, disabled people are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to experience negative attitudes or prejudice, and are more likely to live alone. They still face marginalisation and discrimination.

We help to address the barriers that cause disabled people to be treated unequally, support them in making decisions about what they want to do, and help them put those choices into practice. With the right reassurance and practical assistance, disabled people can live independent lives.

#### *Disability-extrinsic*

Scope works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. We believe in giving disabled people the chance to achieve greater success in their lives, so that they can fully contribute to the economy. Yet today, disabled people are more likely to be unemployed and receiving benefits.

We deliver a range of low cost early interventions – helping to address these issues, while delivering considerable cost savings for both disabled people and the state. Early intervention represents a great return on investment. For example, one initiative costs around £65,000 to set up – that's just £500 each for the 130 or so families that can be reached over the course of a year.

#### *Disability-mixed*

Scope works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. We believe that disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else, enabling them to live the lives they choose. Yet today, disabled people are more likely to be unemployed and receiving benefits and they still face marginalisation and discrimination. In response, we deliver a range of low cost early interventions delivering considerable cost savings for both disabled people and the state.

Disabled people are also more likely to live in poverty, more likely to experience negative attitudes or prejudice, and are more likely to live alone. We help to address the barriers that cause disabled people to be treated unequally, support them in making decisions about what they want to do, and help them put those choices into practice. Early intervention represents a great return on investment. For example, one initiative costs around £65,000 to set up – that's just £500 each for the 130 or so families that can be reached over the course of a year. With the right reassurance and practical assistance, disabled people can live independent lives.

## Environment-related

### *Environment-intrinsic*

Have you ever paused to think about the importance of the natural world? At WWF, we are working to minimise the loss of nature in the UK – such as plants, animals, woodlands or rivers – by helping people to recognise its real value.

The importance of environmental protection is still often overlooked and is not adequately reflected in planning and policy. One reason for this is that people's inherent appreciation of, and love for, the natural world is often forgotten. Reminding people of the intrinsic importance that they attach to nature can help to address this problem.

Consider woodlands, which currently cover nearly 3 million hectares in the UK. At WWF, we are helping people to express and share the feelings they have about woodland areas, and their conviction that it is important to preserve these.

### *Environment-extrinsic*

Have you ever paused to think about the contribution that the environment makes to our national wealth? At WWF, we are working to minimise loss of the UK's natural resources – such as plants, animals, woodlands or rivers – by helping people to recognise their real value.

Natural assets, and the benefits that they provide, are still often overlooked and are not adequately reflected in planning and policy. One reason for this is that the financial value of the environment, and the commercial benefits that people derive, is often overlooked. Putting a monetary value on nature can help to address this problem.

Consider woodlands, which provide a range of essential goods and services and contribute around £1.2 billion to the UK economy. At WWF, we are helping to develop financing schemes to ensure that those who benefit from environmental goods and services compensate those who provide these services.

### *Environment-mixed*

Have you ever paused to think about the importance of the natural world? At WWF, we are working to minimise the loss of nature in the UK – such as plants, animals, woodlands or rivers – by helping people to recognise its real value.

The importance of environmental protection is still often overlooked and is not adequately reflected in planning and policy. One reason for this is that the financial value of the environment, and the commercial benefits that people derive, is often overlooked. Putting a monetary value on nature can help to address this problem.

It is also the case that people's inherent appreciation of, and love for, the natural world is often forgotten. Here, reminding people of the intrinsic importance that they attach to nature can help.

Consider woodlands, which provide us with a range of essential goods and services and contribute around £1.2 billion to the UK economy. At WWF, we are helping to develop financing schemes to ensure that those who benefit from environmental goods and services compensate those who provide these services. We are also helping people to express and share the feelings they have about the 3 million hectares of woodland areas in the UK, and their conviction that it is important to preserve these.